"CALL OF THE RED GODS"

By ELSIE CARMICHAEL

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The editor leaned back in his chair and sighed. The roar of the crowded street down below rose eternally, wearily. He got up and closed the window. Then he read the story again.

It brought great breaths of fragrant air into the stuffy room. He could see the open meadows and woodlands; the dashing, overflowing brooks, where the trout were rising; the throbbing new life bursting out into the sunshine. He felt it all keenly, for he had spent most of that happy boyhood of his up among the hills of Connecticut. Yes, the busiest editor in New York sat there dreaming, while below in the general office people with important business were being turned away by the dozen.

The story was signed simply M. B. Turner, with an address somewhere up in Connecticut. "I never saw any one catch the real spring feeling as that man does," the editor said to himself. "He must be a good angler and general sportsman."

Instead of sending the usual printed slip accepting the article, he picked up his pen and wrote the following note:

Mr. M. B. Turner:

Dear Sir—I have just read your manuscript, "The Call of the Red Gods," and I like it so much that I shall try to make room for it in the May number, which is already made up. I want to tell you personally how much I have enjoyed reading it and how it took me back to my boyhood home. I, too, am an angler by choice, though an editor by necessity. If you have other stories I should be glad to read them. Very truly yours,

JOHN MONTEITH.

The editor of the Twentieth Century was still young and genial, and his outer shell had not yet hardened.

Then he went back to his work and forgot the story. But sometimes in the midst of the rush and confusion of the great magazine office there came a faint, sweet scent of violets and damp, spring earth, and the roar of the city streets was confused with the rush and roar of the brooks overflowing with the spring floods. It was then that the story was uppermost in his mind.

One or two other manuscripts came from the same writer, but none was equal to the first.

"He ought to stick to nature," mused the editor one day in a leisure moment. "I wish I could see him and have a talk on the subject."

He wrote a little note to Mr. M. B. Turner and told him that when he was in town he should be glad to have him call at the office of the Twentieth Century. In reply came a little typewritten note thanking him for the invitation, but as M. B. Turner was setting out for a long summer trip through Canada he could not be in New York until the early fall. It made the office seem very hot and stuffy—the thought of that Canadian trip.

The last of August Monteith managed to get a two weeks' vacation. When he returned from the Maine woods the city looked dirtier and more dingy than ever. It was refreshing to find a note from Mr. Turner stating that [illegible] office on Wednesday [illegible] if that [illegible] editor. That was Monteith's [illegible] day, but without hesitation he sent a cordial invitation to the young author to come at the specified time.

When he went to the office on Wednesday he had a strange feeling of expectation which he could not explain until he remembered that this was the day that the disciple of Izaak Walton was to call. Even while dictating letters to his typewriter his mind was wandering off to the woods and fields he loved so well. His thoughts were called back by Miss Jones and the cessation of the click of the typewriter. "I did not catch that last sentence, Mr. Monteith," she said, looking up, "something about pines and a brook."

Monteith sat up, and a flush deepened on his face even through his tan. "Oh, no!" he said politely. "You must have misunderstood me. But that will do for this morning, Miss Jones, thank you." He had left word downstairs that, although he was busy, he would see Mr. Turner if he called.

It was a quarter before 11 when the office boy, with a most perplexed and worried expression, threw open the door and announced, "Miss Turner."

Monteith rose to his feet. There on the threshold, hesitating, flushed, stood a slight girl in a trim tailor gown. The faint perfume of violets floated into the room.

"I am Miss Turner," she said. "I—I really should have told you before. I only realized it was quite wrong when they almost refused to let me see you and would not believe that I was the expected person."

She looked so much embarrassed that Monteith recovered himself sooner than he could have done otherwise in order to put her at ease. But he, too, flushed.

"I am very glad to see you, Miss Turner," he said, shaking hands with her in his cordial way. "So you are the author of 'The Call of the Red Gods?' You really must forgive me for being so surprised; but, you see, I had always pictured a man—a regular sportsman—and I cannot quite get adjusted to this change. Really, how could you have done it?" he finished abruptly.

"I am rather fond of fishing," she confessed rather apologetically. "I go out constantly with my brother, and so I thought I would try to write up one of my experiences. I was more surprised than any one else when you accepted it. I used my initials hoping that you would think I was a man. I was afraid you would not accept anything about fishing if you thought it was written by a girl."

Monteith laughed. "It does not matter who wrote it," he said. "It was delightful."

The girl's eyes sparkled. "I am so glad!" she said. "I have so wanted to write things that would bring all the freshness of outdoors into other people's lives."

"I did not know that girls ever cared much for that sort of thing, or if they did I fancied they were different from you—more masculine, I mean." He flushed and hesitated.

"Lots of girls care," she said, "only you don't know them. Now, I am never so happy as when fishing or tramping through the woods."

"That is true happiness," said Monteith thoughtfully, looking down into the crowded street. "There is nothing so much to be desired in our complex life of today as simplicity. The craving for excitement is killing the best that is in us, the childlike love of simple things. That is why I liked your story," he finished abruptly, turning back to her. He liked the way the hair curled about her face and the flush under the tanned cheek. She was the picture of health and strength and the joy of life.

He had forgotten that this was a business interview and that he had an important engagement at 11, but the girl remembered.

"I am afraid I am keeping you," she said anxiously. "I know how busy editors are."

"Oh, I quite forgot," he said, smiling, "that I had a business proposition for you. It's all mixed up now, however, because you are not a man. I was going to make you an offer to go through the fishing grounds of Canada and write them up. I'm sorry."

The girl leaned forward eagerly, and the color crept up into her face. "Oh!" she breathed softly. "Could I?"

"I am afraid you couldn't very well," he said doubtfully. "It would be a hard trip, and you couldn't go alone."

"I shouldn't mind the hardness. Perhaps I could persuade my brother to go with me. That reminds me," she said, smiling back at him. "You know my brother. He was in your class at Yale."

"What, Martin Turner?" he cried. "Why, we used to be great pals at college, but I haven't seen him for five years; lost track of him completely. So you are Mart's sister. I am glad."

He looked very boyish as he held out his hand. "We must be very good friends indeed," he cried enthusiastically. "In fact, we are very old friends already, because I remember you very well as a little girl when I visited Mart once years before."

"How very, very funny and delightful!" cried the girl, laughing a delicious, rippling laugh. "I must make Martin ask you to visit us again. We will take you fishing and tramping, and you need not even bring a dress coat. Will you come?"

"Will I come?" he said in a tone that sent the warm blood up into her cheeks. "Just try it and see!"

"Perhaps," he said as he held her hand a moment longer than necessary as she left him—"perhaps you will let me join you and Martin on your Canadian trip. Will you?"

"Perhaps," she said, turning away. Then she looked back with a smile as she entered the elevator. "If the red [illegible] you must, you know."

* * * * * *

[illegible] there was a series of articles on Canadian fishing in the Twentieth Century Magazine signed "Mabel Turner Monteith."

His Hobby.

A tourist passing through an English village churchyard was much astonished to see graven on a tombstone a list of feminine names as follows:

Mary I., Elizabeth, Mary II., Anne, Katharine I., Katharine II.

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed he to an old sexton who was digging a grave not far off. "I wasn't aware there were any queens buried in this part of the country, least of all in such an outlying place as this."

"No more there ain't as I knows on," replied the old fellow, scarcely looking up from his work.

"Well, then, in that case," queried the still surprised tourist, "how comes it that the names of several well known British queens are to be read on that stone yonder?"

"Ah, I see now!" quoth the old gravedigger as he raised himself up and glanced for a moment in the direction referred to. "Lots of your sort make that mistake; but, bless your soul, they bain't no queens of England! They be only the names o' old Billy Green's six wives, and that wor just a hobby o' his'n a-writin' on 'em out like that."

Two Little Stories of Corot.

We have any number of anecdotes about Corot. There is one which explains the artistic mind. He had reported to his employer how successfully he had sold a quantity of beautiful Lyons silks, and he expected some acknowledgment. On the contrary, the draper explained to him that there was no merit in disposing of excellent goods, as the real merit was to sell what was bad, whereupon Corot perceived that this was exactly what an artist cannot do, and he decided to quit commerce. He obtained his father's consent for his career as a painter on what was to him a large annuity of $300.

He was over thirty years old when he first began to paint, on the very day that his father freed him. He used to show that first picture of his to his friends, saying: "It is as young as ever. It marks the hour and the time of day when I did it, but Mlle. Rose, who worked at my mother's and who looked at me at my work, and I—where are we?"—John La Farge in McClure's.

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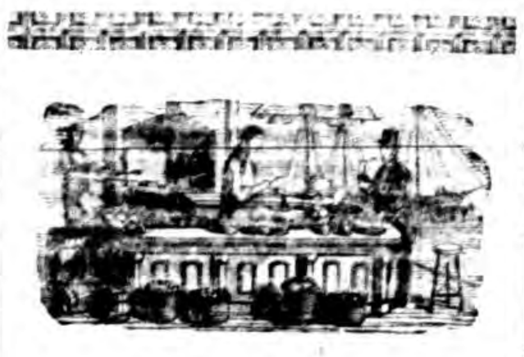
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